

BETWEEN FLORENCE AND AVIGNON

whole weight of this business upon my head." Stefano merely tells us that, by her means, they obtained peace in a miraculous fashion, even against the will of their adversaries ; but we owe to the pen of his Carthusian biographer the dramatic story of how, when Catherine had fixed the day for all the parties to meet at the church of San Cristoforo in the Piazza Tolomei, and Corrado and Stefano with their kinsmen came as arranged, the Tolomei and the Rinaldini, with a view of adding a fresh insult and rendering reconciliation impossible, did not appear. " They will not hear me," said Catherine, " but, when God speaks, they will have to listen." As she prayed and was rapt in ecstasy before the altar, a mysterious force drew the Tolomei and the Rinaldini, each independently of the other, to the church ; a divine light irradiated the emaciated kneeling figure in the black and white habit; and the factious nobles, seeing a sign from God, committed all the controversy into her hands, listened meekly to her words, and exchanged forgiveness and the kiss of friendship with those who, an hour before, had been their deadliest foes.¹

While Catherine was engaged upon this reconciliation, Stefano frequently visited her, and sometimes, to his ineffable delight, she asked him to write letters for her at her dictation. Soon he became heart and soul hers, enkindled by the divine love that ever burned in her ; he exulted when he was made a mark for the jests of the city in consequence, and idlers shouted *Caferinato* after him as he passed through the streets. In return, Catherine loved him with so special an affection that, as he tells us, many of her other followers took it ill, and bore him a certain envy—among whom, however, Neri was not included, for, from the outset, he and Stefano had contracted an ardent friendship which was only to end with the former's death. Stefano now became, for a time, the chief of Catherine's secretaries. "After a short while," he

¹ *Ep'ntola Domni Stepham*, §§ 2, 3 ; Bartholomaeus Senensis, *De Vita et Moribus beati Stepham Macont*, Lib. I, cap. 4-6. Bartholomaeus Senensis assigns the beginning of the feud to the year of pestilence, 1374, and Augusta Drane, evidently rightly, supposes the reconciliation to have occurred early in 1376.